

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TOKYO 12285 01 OF 02 061100Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----030133 061129Z /12

R 061018Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9381

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 12285

EXDIS

FOR SECRETARY VANCE

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY HOLBROOKE

PASS WHITE HOUSE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: XE, PGOV
SUBJECT: FONMIN SONODA REPORT ON HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH
VIETNAMESE VICE FONMIN PHAN HIEN

AT A DINNER WHICH I GAVE IN HONOR OF FOREIGN MINISTER AND
MRS. SONODA ON JULY 5, MINISTER SONODA ASKED IF HE COULD
SPEAK WITH ME PRIVATELY BEFORE THE DINNER. AT THE MEETING
IN THE LIBRARY OF THE RESIDENCE ALONG WITH HIS INTER-
PRETER, HE GAVE ME A RUN-DOWN OF HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH
PHAN HIEN, VICE FOREIGN MINISTER OF VIETNAM. THE FOLLOW-
ING POINTS WERE MADE:

1. WHEN SONODA ASKED HIEN DIRECTLY WHAT WAS THE REASON
FOR VIETNAM JOINING CEMA, HIEN REPLIED THAT VIETNAM
HAD BEEN AN OBSERVER IN CEMA, BUT THAT BECAUSE OF THE
ASSISTANCE GIVEN BY THE SOCIALIST STATES AND VIETNAM'S
NEED FOR CONTINUED ASSISTANCE, IT WAS FELT ADVISABLE AT
THIS TIME TO JOIN UP. HE STRESSED QUITE STRONGLY THAT
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PAGE 02 TOKYO 12285 01 OF 02 061100Z

THIS WOULD NOT AFFECT VIETNAM'S BASIC NONALIGNED POLICY.

2. HIEN INDICATED HIS ACCEPTANCE OF THE US-JAPAN MUTUAL
SECURITY TREATY BECAUSE HE WAS CONVINCED IT WAS FOR THE
DEFENSE OF JAPAN ONLY.

3. HIEN INDICATED APPROVAL OF ASEAN AND THE FUKUDA

DOCTRINE AND WAS PLEASED THAT ARRANGEMENTS HAD BEEN WORKED OUT BETWEEN JAPAN AND VIETNAM OVER THE FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS OF SOUTH VIETNAM. HE URGED THAT JAPAN PROVIDE ADDITIONAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE.

4. HE VERY MUCH WANTS TO ESTABLISH DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE WEST AND ESPECIALLY WITH THE UNITED STATES. HE IS AWARE OF THE OPPOSITION IN CONGRESS AND AMONG THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, BUT HE SAID THAT NORMAL RELATIONS ARE VERY IMPORTANT AND THE MATTER OF COMPENSATION MIGHT, WITH THE PASSAGE OF TIME, BECOME MOOT. HOWEVER, AID IS NEEDED BECAUSE OF CURRENT HEALTH, ECONOMIC AND OTHER CONDITIONS IN VIETNAM.

5. VIETNAM WOULD LIKE TO GET TOGETHER WITH CHINA TO SETTLE THE PRESENT DISPUTE, AND THEY WOULD NOT BE AVERSE TO A THIRD PARTY OFFERING ITS GOOD OFFICES TO MEDIATE BETWEEN THE TWO. I RECEIVED THE IMPRESSION THAT THE "THIRD PARTY" COULD WELL BE JAPAN BUT I AM NOT SURE THAT JAPAN WOULD BE WILLING TO UNDERTAKE SUCH A RESPONSIBILITY UNLESS BOTH PARTIES REQUESTED JAPAN TO DO SO.

6. PHAN HIEN ASSURED SONODA THAT THERE WAS NO RUSSIAN ACTIVITY AT CAM RANH BAY AND THAT THERE WOULD BE NONE. VIETNAMESE POLICY WOULD BE ONE OF STRICT NONALIGNMENT AND THEY HAD NO INTENTION OF OPENING CAM RANH BAY TO ANY

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PAGE 03 TOKYO 12285 01 OF 02 061100Z

FOREIGN POWER.

MINISTER SONODA ASKED ME IF I WOULD CONVEY THESE REMARKS TO WASHINGTON AND TO STATE TO THE PRESIDENT HOW SERIOUS HE THOUGHT THE SITUATION WAS IN VIETNAM, ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF THE PRESENT DIFFICULT RELATIONS BETWEEN VIETNAM AND CHINA AND VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA. REGARDING THE LATTER, HE STATED THAT PHAN HIEN HAD SAID THE VIETNAMESE ARE NOT INTERESTED IN TERRITORIAL ACQUISITIONS FROM CAMBODIA AND REFERRED TO THE PRESENT REGIME THERE AS "OLD ALLIES".

I ASSURED SONODA THAT I WOULD SEND THE GIST OF OUR DISCUSSION TO THE PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY VANCE BUT I EMPHASIZED THAT PHAN HIEN'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE OPPOSITION OF CONGRESS TO EARLY RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF US-VIETNAMESE RELATIONS WAS CORRECT, AND I COULD OFFER LITTLE HOPE. I ALSO SUGGESTED THAT HE DISCUSS HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH PHAN HIEN WITH THE CHINESE AMBASSADOR TO JAPAN, MR. FU HAO. IN REPLY, HE SAID HE WOULD DO SO AND ALSO WITH THE CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTER IN PEKING LATER THIS MONTH. HE SAID HE HAD TOLD PHAN HIEN THAT HE WOULD DISCUSS THESE MATTERS WITH ME THIS EVENING AS HE WAS COMING

TO DINNER AT THE RESIDENCE.

I DO NOT THINK THAT SONODA IS EASILY DISTURBED BUT I DO
FEEL THAT HE SENSES THE POSSIBILITY OF A FLAREUP IN INDO-
CHINA IF THE VIETNAMESE/CHINESE AND THE VIETNAMESE/CAMBODI-
AN DIFFICULTIES ARE NOT RESOLVED. OUR PRIVATE CONFERENCE
LASTED ABOUT FORTY MINUTES.

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PAGE 01 TOKYO 12285 02 OF 02 061103Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----030140 061131Z /12
R 061018Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9382

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 TOKYO 12285

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FOR SECRETARY VANCE

PASS WHITE HOUSE

WHILE I AM SENDING THIS MESSAGE AS FOREIGN MINISTER SONODA
REQUESTED, I DO NOT SEE WHAT THE UNITED STATES CAN DO
ABOUT THESE MATTERS AT THIS TIME. HOWEVER, IT IS QUITE
POSSIBLE THAT, IF ALLOWED TO DRAG ON, THE CONSEQUENCES
COULD BE VERY GRAVE. THE SITUATION COULD SPREAD BEYOND
INDO-CHINA AND THE PEACE AND STABILITY WHICH HAS BEEN
MAINTAINED IN THIS AREA FOR THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS COULD
BE BROKEN, WITH DANGEROUS AND UNPREDICTABLE EFFECT.
MANSFIELD

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REPORTS, MINISTERIAL VISITS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TOKYO12285
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780277-0270
Format: TEL
From: TOKYO
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780788/aaaacwjo.tel
Line Count: 161
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 4273e779-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2094580
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FONMIN SONODA REPORT ON HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH VIETNAMESE VICE FONMIN PHAN HIEN AT A DINNER WHICH I GAVE IN HONOR OF FOREIGN MINIS
TAGS: PGOV, OVIP, PEPR, XE, VM, JA, (PHAN HIEN), (SONODA, SUNAO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/4273e779-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014